

Procedures and guidelines for the installation of all speed limit zones

All speed limit zones must comply with the Texas Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (TMUTCD), which itself must also conform to national standards. Using the guidelines found in this manual, an investigation is conducted which determines the appropriate speed limit. The following are some of the steps taken to ensure speed limits are installed correctly.

- 1.** First an investigation is performed on the road in question in order to determine its classification. This includes observing the width of road, road surface, shoulder conditions, grade, curvature, sight distance, roadside development, and traffic accident history.
- 2.** A determination of the speed limit is then made based on the data obtained from the field investigation.
- 3.** Once speed limit is determined, a City ordinance is written identifying the limits of the speed limit zone. The ordinance is then sent to City Council for approval.
- 4.** After the City Council approves the proposed speed limit zone, the Street Department is instructed to install the necessary signs.



City of El Paso

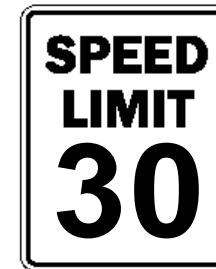
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**ENGINEERING
DEPARTMENT
TRAFFIC DIVISION**

Information Brochure

Speed Limits



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City of
El Paso
Texas

Speed Limits

The setting of speed limits can sometimes be a controversial subject. This controversy is often fueled by the lack of information or understanding of speed limits by the public.

This information brochure was prepared by the City of El Paso, Traffic Division to inform the public on some of the standards and procedures pertaining to speed limits that will hopefully clarify any misunderstandings and/or questions about speed limits.

What is the law?

In the Texas Drivers Handbook it states the following:

“All drivers are required to obey posted maximum and minimum speed limits. These limits are designed to provide for the orderly flow of traffic under normal driving conditions. During periods of heavy traffic, inclement weather, low visibility, or other poor driving conditions, speed must be adjusted so that accidents will be avoided.”

In the absence of posted speed limits, the state of Texas sets legal speed limits on different classes of roads. Every licensed motorist is expected to know these speed limits even if the speed is not posted. These speed limits are as follows:

	Daytime (mph)	Nighttime (mph)
Alleys	15	15
Urban Districts	30	30
State Highways	70	65

*Urban Districts includes all city roads except freeways and state highways

Will a lower speed limit help reduce speeds?

Each year, the City receives many requests to reduce speed limits as a way to reduce speeding and increase safety. However, it is only a myth that posting lower speed limits will cause motorists to slow down and will reduce

accidents. In reality, research shows that motorists are influenced by the type of road and the prevailing traffic conditions, and not by the posted speed limit. Before and after studies have confirmed that changes to the posted speed limit has no effect on the speed of vehicles or safety. People usually drive at a speed that experience indicates is safe for the road conditions. Usually police involvement or traffic calming measures for residential neighborhoods prove more effective in reducing the number of speeders.

How are speed zones established?

The classification of a road usually determines the speed limit. All roads in the city are categorized by certain characteristics common to each class of road. Studies have been performed to determine the safe and practical speed limits on each type of road based upon actual driving behavior of the public. The following is a table that lists road classes and their corresponding speed.

Road Classification	Roadway	Lanes	Speed
Minor Residential	20 ft.	2	30 mph
Major Residential	28 ft.	2	30 mph
Residential Subcollector	36 ft.	2	30 mph
Collector Arterial	44 ft.	4	35 mph
Minor Arterial	56 ft.	4	40 mph
Major Arterial	66 ft.	6	45 mph
Super Arterial	88 ft.	8	50 mph

This table is only used as a guideline, under ideal conditions. The final determination of the speed limit depends on many factors. The following are some of the factors that also help determine the speed limit:

- Road characteristics, shoulder condition, grade, alignment, and sight distance
- The speed traffic flows at, the pace speed
- Roadside development and environment
- Parking practices and pedestrian activity
- Reported crash experience for at least a 12-month period

Engineering judgment plays an important role in deciding the speed limit on a road when unique conditions exist and therefore, all of the above factors must be considered carefully.

How is the placement of speed limit signs determined?

The placement of speed limit signs should be anywhere the speed limit changes, identifying the beginning and end of different speed zones. Additional speed limit signs should also be placed beyond major intersections so that motorists will be able to see the sign when turning into the speed zone. Speed limit signs can also be placed at other locations where it is determined necessary to remind motorists of the speed limit, however placing signs at unnecessary locations is discouraged. The typical sign costs about \$150 to install and approximately \$20 per year to maintain. The City currently has approximately 70,000 signs and as the number of signs increases, maintaining them becomes extremely difficult and expensive.

How is a speed study requested?

A speed study can be a useful tool in identifying or justifying that a problem exists on a poorly designed road. However, lowering or posting the speed limit is usually not the answer, but knowing that a problem does exist, other measures can then be applied to solve the problem. To request a speed study if it is believed a problem exist, all that is needed is a phone call or written request. Please contact the Traffic Division at 541-4050 or write to:



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What are some typical signs used in speed zones?

